MÉLANIE

BY

HARTE CONSTANTE

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MÉLANIE
AND OTHER POEMS

"And I noticed three gems which encircled their crowns, through *Ministry*, *Prayer*, and *Sacrifice*.

Dream of a Future State.

MÉLANIE

AND OTHER POEMS

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HARTE CONSTANTE

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MÉLANIE

I

A student paused beside the gate
Of sombre, gloomful "*Sainte Therèse*";
Relic of long-forgotten days,
Holding its own from distant date;
A frowning, massive, towering pile,
Black, blurred, defaced, from base to tile;

Its casements narrow, iron-barred,
Proclaiming " *Here, 'neath watch and ward*
Hide Sinners 'gainst the laws of France ; "
And if a loiterer chanced to glance
A moment, on a tablet placed
In durance, on the wall defaced,
He there might read the Founder's name,
And learn the Saint's recorded aim—
Convicted felons to reclaim.

The student, pausing idly there,
Recked little of man's crime and woe,
In which his joyance held no share ;
Deeply immersed in lettered lore,

Well worn the ancient tome he bore,
The goal at which he aimed—"*to know*"

Genius and youthful hope were his ;
And that refined, inspiring bliss,
The meed of those who seek t'explore
And clutch each atom of golden lore
Old-world philosophers have strown ;
Light, light, and still more light, their own
Sweeter than rest the mental strain,
Precious the thought-gifts that remain.

He stood for shelter at the gate,
Pausing to let the rain abate ;

But heavier still the torrents fell,
And fiercer still the March wind rose ;
"Now, by St. Hildebrand ! 'twere well
This conflict with the storm to close ;
And—facing spectral forms that lurk
Within, to mar the fair saint's work—
Escape from Hermès in his rage—
Some dragon will unbar the cage."
Dolorous rang the deep-toned bell,
Resonant as some deathful knell ;
A warder oped, and led him on
Through mildewed courtyard, dank and chill,
Enclosed by towering walls of stone,
With stifling weight that seemed to fill

The air with an oppressive gloom ;
Behind him clanged the iron door ;
He murmured, " Sinners meet their doom,
" This savours of a living tomb ; "
As dingy hall and stone-paved floor
Stared grim before his stranger-gaze,
And shrieking wailed the mournful wind ;
" A tomb," he said, " no sunlit rays
" Can pierce within, admittance find ;
" Atonement ample lieth here,
" No need for penance, pains, or worse,
" To cower in dolorous darkness drear,
" Were wage for sin,—atoning curse.
" God's angel in her wingèd flight
" From world to world, on tasks of love,

"Would scarcely pause, methinks, to light
"This charnel house of cheerless night,
"But seek a purer air above ;
"Sorrow and sin repel the good ! "—
Light words ! ere yet another hour
Had fled—with mocking pitiless power,
Those random words before him stood ;
Flung back upon his memory,
In their loveless unreality.

Beyond the chamber, void of cheer,
To stranger visitants assigned,
The sound of voices met his ear,
Mingling with moanings of the wind,

Breaking the ruesome, awful stillness ;
Loud utterance, hoarse and harsh and rude,
Blended with querulous moan subdued,
Each meet to share the gloom and chillness.
"Oh! curse the rain!" he mused irate,
"Driving me in this hell to wait!
Freezes the marrow of one's bones,
Thus hearkening to a madman's groans."

Then rose a voice, so sweet, so nigh,
Speech lifted into melody ;
Quickly it hushed all other sound,
Alien it seemed to all around,

Clear as the crisp notes of a bird ;
The student started—" Have I erred ?
" Do strains float downwards from the sky ?
" Is it God's angel tarrying nigh ? "

" *Plein de misère, de faiblesse, O levez vos yeux vers Dieu, sous lequel on s'abaisse sans désespoir. Il est venu appeler à la penitence, et justifier les pécheurs. Hors de lui, il n'y a que vice, misère, tenèbres. Il n'y a de bien en cette vie qu'en l'esperance d'une autre. Ce peu de temps, qui m'est donné à vivre ici, est comme un ombre qui ne dure qu'un instant, et sans retour.*"
The listening student closer drew
Towards the portal ; strong desire

The speaker and the scene to view
Filling his soul ; a new-born fire
Kindling within ; yet, pausing, bent
His head, in wondering awe, to hear ;
Rapture and reverence closely blent—
Again the voice was lifted clear—

"*Rien n'est si important à l'homme que son etat ; entre nous et l'enfer ou le ciel, il n'y a que la vie, qui est le chose du monde le plus fragile. Et Dieu à voulu ouvrir le salut eternel à ceux qui le chercheraient. L'homme est visiblement égaré, et tombe de son vrai lieu, helas ! et sans le pouvoir rètrouver. Mais le bon Dieu a offert le sacrifice de la Croix pour tous. Sans lui,*

il faut que l'homme soit dans misère, et dans le vice. Faisons penitence, pour voir s'il aura pitié de nous."

The listener's self-restraint no more
Prevailed—he passed within the door,
In eager haste to gaze on her
Whose voice arose his soul to stir ;
Lovely—like strains at eventide
Borne on the wave, and glorified
Through magical weirdness of the hour
And strange surroundings—dowered with power
A mystic answer to awake ;
He felt like one who pants to slake
His thirst in some enchanted lake

Whose waters roll their waves of blue
To dazzle and enthrall the view ;
Or even as one uplifted, borne
  On wings, to some celestial shore,
Breathing the air of early morn,
  Treading a gem-encrusted floor—
A wondrous paradise arose ;
  And as he looked upon her face
  So bathed in light, he scarce could trace
Features of earth, but rather those
Of wingèd saint in dreamlight fair—
He lifted up his heart in prayer.

Brief moments fled ; her robe of white
  Swept past him, as she moved away ;

He trembled 'neath the gentle ray
With hope and chastened gladness bright
Of those unconscious innocent eyes ;
His presence started no surprise ;
The current of her thoughts unbroken,
Wrapt in the message she had spoken,
Her soul with spiritual rapture glowed ;
Still on one saving deed intent,
'Twas thus her secret musings flowed,
" Oh ! never vainly am I sent !
" Surely, when closed this earthly scene
" Who sow the seed, the harvest glean ! "
Her glance was gentle, soft, and kind ;
It sealed the summons—heaven-designed.

Little he dreamed, that, on that hour
Events divine, momentous, hung ;
Swift-fleeting moments, strong in power
To mould a life ! New thoughts upsprung.

Swift-fleeting moments ! heaven-designed !
In them his future lay enshrined ;
The cord that bound to earth was rent,
Henceforth he left the world behind,
His life with Christ for ever blent.

II

" Melanie, Marie, de Montcalme ; "
The name involved a subtle charm,
Despite a reasoning will, which bade
This baseless dream dissolve and fade.

He saw her pass away, attended
With each environment of state ;
And who was he ? poor, unbefriended,
A votary at Learning's gate !

In vain the truth he sought to hide,
In vain to stem the rising tide.

His trains of deep scholastic thought,
His high aspirings to renown ;
Great aims, which he himself had taught,
Fair hopes ! they all, alas ! had flown ;
He stood, as in some lofty hall,
From whence each trophy, dearly bought,
Each household god, had vanished all——
Worthless the work his hands had wrought.

And in their place, what rested yet ?
A sad repining for a star——
A mad, unreasoning regret
For that which dwelt wide worlds afar ;

Blent with convictions, strong and new,
That homage, heart, to God were due.

Not like some happier souls, possessing
Delight in treading mercy's ways ;
Who feast upon the power of blessing,
And claim their meed in work, not praise——
He shrunk from tasks of ministry——
Unwinged, as yet, for service high.

His books, his verse, his mental flights
These were his wealth—these formed his bliss ;
But now they paled—his best delights
Long-gathered force—had come to this.

"Why feast on bygone lore? on me
The world may close ere matin-chime;
My soul, launched on eternity,
Turn callously from things of time.
Wherefore woo science? speculate
Enraptured midst its mysteries?
When death—by knocking at the gate
May swift avail to ope these eyes?
Why with the pen, beguile the hour,
Framing word-music, fancy free?
God claims each gift, each work, each power
To Him alone my song must be;
Its theme, the love of One who died——
Such thoughts—such song alone abide.

"Oh! that, forsaking flowery meads,
Flinging pursuit of fame behind,
This soul could seek, in holy deeds
That peace, which saints prevail to find.

"Light of the stars—light of the moon——
Warm sunshine poured from source divine
And bounteous—who can say how soon
Your rays, for me, may cease to shine!

"And if, when 'changed,' I fain would dwell,
Shunning the darkness of a hell,
In light more concentrate and pure,

Now must the warning dawnlight waken—
Now must the heavy cross be taken—
They only triumph, who endure."

"Oh! sinful man! that recked not how
Each tortured soul might writhe below!
Oh! blinded sight,
Whose loftiest flight
Reached but to pleasures of a day,
Eternal gain or loss unheeded,
Desiring fruits that pass away,
While rather 'bread of life' was needed—
Learn from this royal child! and cast
The world and all its snares aside;

Blot out the memory of the past,
Follow her steps, thy gentle guide !
Each pleasure shun, each penance seek,
With heart regenerate and meek,
Finish the work by her begun ;
That, when thy course on earth is run,
Thou and thy Mélanie, may be
Companions through eternity.
She nerved me for the coming fight,
She smote my darkness into light,
And freely now I all resign ;
Suffering and toil alone be mine ;
Emptied of all, press onward to the close,
Looking to death for rescue and repose."

III

His purpose reached the friendly ear
Of one, from early childhood dear
L'Abbé de St. Aulaire ;
With mingled wonder and regret
This self-abandonment was met,
" Reject thy lawful share
" Of innocent and precious things
" Which gracious Godhead grandly flings
" To lighten grief and care !

" Pascal ! thy thoughts, unripe and crude
" Point to a barren altitude,
" Man's weakness may not face ;
" God grants us powers, refreshments sweet
" To help to lead us to His feet
" Not hindrances to grace ;
" Take each, take all, and ceaseless praise uplift;
" He wrongs the giver who contemns the gift.

" Can He whose glorious sunbeams fill
" And set aglow the earth and skies,
" Can He, the source of beauty, will
" That clouds ascetic blank and chill
" Shall shroud and blind His children's eyes ? "

Then—past the first quick utterance—fervid
glow,
Flowed on his speech, in measured words
and slow.

"Weakness, not strength, leads man from
joys to fly
"Lest they assume unlawful mastery ;
"Each mental gift, controlled, and used for
good,
"Raises the man above the multitude ;
"A nobler sphere of influence bestows,
"Widening the stream from whence pure
blessing flows.

"He best can cope with sin of every kind,
"Who, armed for striving, leaves no strength behind.
"Wherefore scorn knowledge? hush the poet-song?
"Reject th' enlightening lore of ancient sages?
"Uplifted by the muse, our wings wax strong;
"God's judgments blaze on history's blotted pages;
"The intellect of man is formed to soar;
"Science yields glimpses of creative might
"In regions where but fitful gleams break o'er,
"Shall we refuse to stand within its light?

"Like heathen fanatic, to immolate
"In barbarous sacrifice, each goodly power,
"Far other tribute He on whom we wait
"Demands; to him he bids us dedicate
"Fruit of each toil, meed of each conquering hour."

These words smote Pascal. Claude de St. Aulaire
Shone before men a Christian paladin;
To fervent action, ministry, and prayer
He added noble enterprise, to win
Up steep scholastic heights, a wrestler's name;
Scorning alike the guerdon and the fame.

With love unchanged, yet saddened, each true soul,
Sealed to his separate call, passed on his way ;
Blind wrestlers ! blinder watchmen ! who can say,
On whose brow brightlier shines the aureole !

IV

What led his steps, that misty morn
To seek the gloom of "*Sainte Therèse?*"
Ere earliest harbinger of dawn
Had passed its pencil o'er the skies
In faint, soft streaks of tinted dyes—
What made him stand, and pause, and gaze?

Mysterious influences pervade
This world of sight and sound; unseen

Their motive force is deftly laid
Permitting nought to intervene.

The student came, and lingered there,
Unconscious of desire or aim
Saving to haunt the threshold where
He once had seen her, heard her name ;
And wonder, undisguised, assailed,
When—ere an hour had passed away,
Two nun-like figures, closely veiled,
Traversed the dark and lonely way,
With hasty steps, approached the spot,
Pausing before the gloomful place ;
Each outline dim—concealed each face—
As yet he recognised her not.

The call was answered slowly—still
A work-day throng delayed to fill
Its sphere of toil—awaiting dawn ;
Chill was the air, that misty morn ;
Ghostly the sombre pile arose
Just outlined, faint and grim, for those
Who sought its gloom ; thick vapours curled
Around a formless, shapeless world,
In denseness serving still to hide
The student standing by her side.

For him, a wondrous mystic call
Led him to follow where she went ;
She trod the courtyard—reached the hall
Burned there a lamp—revealing all ;

Unveiled stood Mélanie, intent,
Absorbed by one divine desire,
Glowing beneath that sacred fire.

" Mons de Ligne ! il n'est pas mort deja ? le pecheur qu'on appelle Dideron ? Non ? Dieu soit béni ! Voila, que je me leve de bonne heure. Oh ! Monsieur, le nuit passé, m'a frappé l'oreille ce voix d'une âme perdue, trois fois, trois fois, m'a blessé le cri— " Ayez pitié de moi

" Je meurs sans espoir

" Le colère de Dieu me jette a l'enfer." Me voila venue essayer la priere, le racheter du feu ; tu vois que je tremble——"

Then to the student lingering nigh
She turned, with frank and earnest gaze ;
His spirit joyed, his heart beat high,
He dared an answering glance to raise.

"*Le bon curé, n'est pas? il vient, il me semble, de bonne heure aussi.*"

"*Oh, Madame! mais non. Me voici grand pécheur comme le Dideron.*"

She gazed on him with grave surprise ;
Then broke a smile from gladsome eyes—

"*Monsieur, en êtes vous sure? Il me parait que vous vous trompez lá. Vous, grand pécheur! vous méme—non pas—Je trouve qu'il n'y a de maître pour vous; jamais de maître que le bon Dieu!*"

"Madame! tout abaissé je vous supplie, pour moi étendez la votre grace; permettez moi que je prie aupres de le Dideron—et de vous!"

"Mais oui, assurément viennant les priéres unis a monter au ciel. Vitement—le temps vole—"

Oh! altitude of bliss, to stand
Beside his angel—hear her voice—
To follow at her blest command—
With her to pray—rejoice—rejoice!
"Behold the aureole on her brow,
"Behold the lily in her hand,
"Can Life yield more of gladness now?

Can this adoring heart demand
"More from the giver?" Alas! was blent
With thoughts like these, a wild lament.
The minor chord was struck; a sense
Of anguish marred the joy intense;
"So far apart! on earth—above!
"Crush down the madness of such love!"
Arose an infinite regret—
Unmeet, unworthy, hopeless, vile,
Helpless, despairing—yet, and yet
He followed where her gentle smile
Drew him towards the felon's cell;
And, as she prayed, again, again,
And tears of godlike pity fell—
Those prayers, those tears, were not in vain.

" Yea! not for Dideron alone
" Those wrestlings pure; they are mine own;
" They draw me upwards, that, through woe
" And utter dearth endured below,
" This soul may purified arise
" To dwell with her beyond the skies."

———

V

In slow progression, weary days
  Rolled onward, fraught with toil unswerving ;
Earnest desire to walk God's ways,
  Zeal undeterred the King in serving ;

One sacred flame burned on unchecked ;
And little, little had he recked
Of suffering—as the martyrs smiled

While on the rack of torture laid—
So he—if but this royal child
Had been vouchsafed, to stand and aid
His course ; yea ! he had agonised
With joyfulness, if that bright star
So little seen, so dearly prized,
Had shone upon his path ;—but no !
She dwelt from him remote and far ;—
On that remembered morn, when low
They knelt within the convict cell,
And on his ear so softly fell
The tones of that angelic voice,
Bidding the penitent "rejoice,"
And light within made darkness flee—
He looked his last on Mélanie.

No need to trace his path of sadness,
His weary days and hours of woe,
Unbrightened by the sacred gladness
From ties of earthly love that flow
Self-martyred, by a martyrdom
So slow, that time, with solemn tread,
Laid snows of age upon his head,
Ere beckoning angels called him home.

How fair a picture his life had been
If swept aside those mists that shrouded
Light from above, and darkly clouded
The simple beauty of the scene ;

God offered, from his boundless store,
Rich gifts of art and lettered lore,
Sweet blessings to refresh his lot—
Mists rolled between—he claimed them not,

To him, and many a soul, 'tis given
To tread a stony path to heaven ;
Yet weary toils are not unblest—
Sharp labour ends in sweetest rest.

VI

Pascal (*in thought*) *to the Princess*

" Thou who didst first my spirit lead
" To seek the steep and narrow path—
" Who first revealed my utter need
" Of shelter from th' " avengers " wrath—
" Thou who dids't show what God must be
" Whose angel shone so gently mild,
" And how the love of deity
" Reclaimeth wretches sin-defiled—

" And how true followers of the Lord
" Will to upraise each soul from dust,
" To echo, faint, but true, each word
" Of mercy uttered by the Just——
" Methinks, thou in thy heaven apart
" Will claim, and take as dearest meed,
" The joy of each repentant heart—
" Guerdon of heavenly worth indeed!
" And when, in other sphere, I seek
" And find thee, robed in white, and crowned,
" A smile upon thy face shall speak
" ' Angels rejoice in wanderers found.'
" Then shall I, self-discrownèd, lay
" The wreath vouchsafed by love Divine

" At thy dear feet—and rapturous say,
" ' My angel princess—it is thine—
" ' And lips rejoicing, shall repeat
" ' Thy beckoning hand still drew me on—
" ' Made sufferings bliss, and penance sweet,
" ' Till life's black night was past and gone.
" ' Labour and fasting, struggles sore
" ' Rebukes and pangs—seem nought to me,
" ' Safe anchored on the sunlit shore——
" ' Thou art with God—and I with thee.' "

* * * * *

Thus, 'neath his love, his pride bent low ;
Thus dreamed he blindly, in the glow
Of utter self-abasement, fain

All, all to yield—nought to retain ;
And yet, in this, behold, he erred ;
Chartered by the Creator's word,
Man stands as ruler—woman's lord,
While she, in sweet subjection, brings
Her tender ministry, and flings
Reflexions of the true and high,
As waters mirroring the sky.

Thus Pascal's love, o'er wrought, intense,
Claimed for his saint pre-eminence
O'er-lofty ; it was his to soar
On wings of strength, long long before

To equal height, her soul attained ;
More nobly up the steep he strained,
More heavy was the cross he bore,
More radiant was the crown in store ;

But, like the wide o'erarching skies,
  Whose tints at sunrise, sunset, glow
In seagreen, gold, and azure dyes
  Bright mirrored in the lake below—
'Twas fated that he first should see
  In gazing downwards, clear revealed,
His spirit's wide capacity,
  Its depth, its beauty, unconcealed ;

Ere death approached, and earth waxed dim,
The gentle Mélanie to him
Was but a ray—lost in the sun
From whence it came—its mission done.

VII

He, who on some moonlit night,
With heart attuned to praise,
Shall bend his steps to gain the height
Of solemn Père la Chaise——
May there discern, beneath the shade
Of one o'er arching cypress tree,
The sacred spot, where love hath laid
Sculptured memorials of three
Servants of Christ, whose earth-forms sleep

Guarded with mystic care
By saints invisible, who keep
Their loving vigil there——

A tomb—Art bade in splendour rise
Where faith stands forth, with arm
Uplifted—pointing to the skies—
Marks where a holy maiden lies
"*Mélanie, princesse de Montcalme.*"

Near it, a pure white cross is placed
With many a scroll and symbol graced,
And angel faces, sweet and fair
Smile down on "*Claude de St. Aulaire.*"

While lowly—nigh the robe of Faith,
A stone is laid—no name is given ;
The simple marble only saith
" His soul, from fount of sorrow, poured
" Incense of praise ; and now, in heaven
" He rests ' for ever with the Lord ? ' "

I

She knelt before the altar rail,
And prayed for one she loved the best ;
O'er golden frieze and tracery pale
Sunbeams passed dimly from the west,
Of ruby, jacinth, chrysolite,
Through tinted panes of sapphire blue
Wrought into shapes of wondrous hue
That blended to embrace the light.

Around, rose sculptured forms of stone
Which seemed to watch, in solemn rest,
That bending suppliant, sad and lone,
Hilda—the maid of Heldensfest.

True heart! oh! vain were words to tell
The dread with which that heart was wrung;
And how her faint hopes rose and fell,
As still, by day, by night, one prayer
Breathed forth—now strong to quell despair,
Now lost upon the faltering tongue.
Each day, at early morn, she sought
The sacred ground; and patient brought

Her soul's request before the Lord,
Waiting in faith for answering word.

Hour after hour—day after day,
She knelt before the altar rail ;
And grave monks paused, and passed away
Loth to disturb that suppliant pale
To whom all life, all woe, all pains
Merged into one great agony—
" My Hubert pines in dungeon chains,
" Oh ! Saviour ! do not let him die !
" A champion for his country's laws,
" His soul aglow with courage high,
" He struggled in a righteous cause,
" Pattern and prince of chivalry—

" My sainted mother, ere she died
" Said, ' who best loves can pray the best ; '
" My love is deep as ocean tide,
" Strong in its depth to sweep aside
" The shallow love of all the rest.

" I have no wealth of words for prayer ;
" Untutored and unlearned am I !
" But mother said ' Wherever there
" Was *weight o' wishing* in the word,
" Ev'n halting sounds by Him were heard—'
" Then, Saviour ! do not let him die ! "

A little bird, at glad sunrise
  Dared on that sacred spot to light ;
She saw it not—her weeping eyes
  Were sealed against all earthly sight ;
She only saw the golden cloud
  Which veiled the presence of the Lord
Before whose majesty she bowed,
  Into whose ear her prayer was poured.

At noon, a wanderer passed within ;
  Tattered his vest, and sad his plight,
Drooping beneath a weight of sin
  Which plunged his soul in blackest night

His brow was scored, his head was bent—
Earth-joy was dead—his courage spent—
"No hope!" he moaned—"no grace—no
light."
And yet anon, beholding there
A kneeling form absorbed in prayer,
Dawned gleams of faith within his breast;
And as hours fled, and still she knelt
In passionate appeal—he felt
Of distant, newborn hope possesst,
And with awakened thoughts and higher
Came kindlings of the sacred fire.
"A woman weak! yet strong in trust
"That help will come—that *He* will hear
"Who raised the widow's son from dust,

"And dried the hopeless sinner's tear—
"Shall I, a coward, court despair?
"Yon praying soul, who worships there,
"Behold! she *loves*—she does not *fear*."

At eve—a silken courtier passed
Through the dim aisles—surveyed the scene
With artist eye; and glances cast
On tinted casements mellow sheen,
On gorgeous niche, and breathing stone
On tesselated pavement rare;
And in his heart was fain to own,
Faultless the tombs—the building fair.

No weight of sin by him was felt;
It was his wont at prayer to scoff
As superstition's child, whereof
Came morbid fancies of the brain
Which wise men sweep aside as vain.

He watched the suppliant as she knelt,
And marvelled that so sweet a flower
Should droop and blanch from hour to hour.
But, as eve darkened into night,
  And still he paused, and still she prayed
A cloud o'ercast his calm delight
  With chillsome spell—he felt afraid!

"Crowds meet 'neath gilded canopy,
Arrayed in splendour—gaze around;
On broidered cushions bend the knee,
And feast themselves on sacred sound;
Then lightly, as they came, depart,
Unblessed, unsanctified in heart.
But other far this scene I view;
Mute lips, but pleadings wrestling through
The darkness; this is prayer indeed——
Some listener surely knows her need!
A woman, sad, forlorn, alone,
In weakness strong to reach the throne;
From hour to hour, behold her still
Invincible in faith and will."

Night deepened—mournful grew and chill
Each sculptured niche, each marble tomb
The solemn arches gathered gloom
And haunting spirits seemed to fill
Recesses dim—then, poignant pain,
Unwonted dread, assailed his brain—
"Heavens! if there be a God on high,
"And not a blind unreasoning fate,
"'Twere utter madness not to fly
"And seek for mercy ere too late!
"Some ruling power, to whom she bends,
"In whose liege hand lies life and death,
"Who gentle souls, like hers, befriends,
"But smites the scoffer with His breath;
"Surely some kingship reigneth there,

" Else whence this passionate pleading prayer?
" This fight unwavering 'gainst despair?
" If it be true that He can save
" From mortal loss, and yawning grave,
" Mad were the wretch to turn and wait,
" Nor seek for mercy till too late! "

II

Dawned the last day ; the bell was tolled ;
She shivered as she heard the sound,
A dark wave o'er her spirit rolled—
Yet still she clung to holy ground ;

And only prayed the more, the more,
Lifting to heaven a piercing cry—
" Thou Saviour Lord ! whom I adore,
Have mercy ! do not let him die ! "

God knows each whisper of the soul ;
Prayer, winged by faith, ne'er missed its goal !

Tho' not to all the answer passes
For earthly weal—'gainst earthly woe—
One wide eternal mirror glasses
Each aspiration pure—and lo !
Whether the word be "yea," or "no,"
Whoso clings steadfast to the cross,
Though faint 'neath clouds of dread or loss,
Hath yet prevailed, nor prayed for nought ;
For him some wondrous work is wrought,
Angels draw nigh ; another prize,

Unrecognised by blinded eyes,
Slowly unfolds before his sight,
Enshrined in a diviner light ;
And to that joy-stream he is brought,
Which—knowing all—he first had sought.

But, as sweet incense wafted high,
With heavenly harmonies to blend,
The prayer of Hilda touched the sky,
Her soul should rest—her sorrow end.

The hearts of kings are in His hand,
Their stubborn will to His must bend.

Quick spread the missive through the land
Weighted with royalty's command,
" Proclaim our tidings far and wide,
Peace, by alliance, ratified ;
Keep we a day of jubilee ;
Unbar the gates—the prisoners free ! "

III

Hubert awoke, new life to share—
That wearied captive—keen
After the warfare and despair
To be as he had been ;
To breathe the fragrance of the air,
To greet the carol of the bird ;
One voice to hear, too long unheard !
To taste of joys anew begun
'Neath brighter smile of sky and sun.

He sought her in her silent home,
Where, like some solitary flower
Of friends bereft, in wintry hour,
She dwelt with God, apart, alone.
He spake her name, he bade her "come;
Where art thou? thou belovèd one!"
Oh! when had Hubert called in vain!
O'er him there fell a weight of dread,
A hidden agony of pain;
Fast beat his heart with deepening fear;
He sought her still, afar, anear,
In haunts which she was wont to tread,
In crowded street, o'er verdant plain,
In shady dell, by rocky cave,
Where, with rude murmur, lashed the wave,

In lowly cot, where, oft at eve
Hilda had loved to minister
Sweet balm, for souls foredoomed to grieve,
He sought ; but none could tell of her !
At length, within the house of God,
His weary, trembling footsteps trod ;
Bounded again his heart swift-lightened,
As, by the altar, bending low,
In grief which One alone might know—
His love he saw ! new glory brightened
Each sculptured niche, each solemn aisle,
Transfigured rose the sacred pile
In unimagined majesty ;
A newborn sense of beauty, high
And spiritual, dawned ; he stood renewed

With soul at rest!

. . . . In awe subdued

He stole upon ~~his~~ her solitude.

* * * * * * * *

An ecstasy of bliss was theirs,

Joy, which the angels bent to see,

The King of heaven had heard her prayers,

Her faith was crowned, her Hubert free.

Oh! for a seraph voice to raise

A melody constraining, sweet,

And strong in mystic effluence, meet

To draw men's hearts to faith and praise;

To say to those who downward gaze,

That God will hear, if men will pray.
Prayer is the weapon wrought to slay
Each dread, each peril, each despair,
All can be won by faith and prayer.

IV

Sunny was Hilda's span of life,
  Yet short ; she might not tarry here
To war again mid' earthly strife ;
  Swift summoned to another sphere
A spirit winged to dwell on high,
  She left a golden link behind,
  Which one who loved her best should find
To draw him upwards to the sky.

Not parted long—not parted long ;
And rich the fruits that yet remained,
Two souls for Jesus' kingdom gained ;
One pardoned sinner joined the throng
Ere many years had fleeted by,
He who had risen from fell despair,
Loosed from his dread captivity ;
And one who late had scoffed at prayer
Earnest in faith, found entrance there ;
From voices twain arose the sound,
" Redeemed forgiven—the shepherd found,
" Through woman's mute unconscious aid ;
" Blesséd be Hilda ! for she prayed."

THOUGHTS ON CALLISTA

Her life was ever tending more
'Towards the stars;' her soul astir
With love for Him who died for her;
And oftentimes would joy break o'er
Her features, as some prescient thought
A vision of the future caught.
Steeped in all high imaginings,

The heroine of the tale by Rev. J. H. N.

Ev'n as some ardent racer flings
Aside each weight, that, unrestrained,
The course be run, the goal be gained,
Unfaltering still, she strained along
In sorrow, bright, in weakness, strong.

There was a light within her eyes
Which seemed to say " Arise, arise,
Soon shall this earth dissolve to nought
A new eternal life begin ;
The day of judgment cometh, fraught
With terror to the souls that sin ;
Arise, arise ; the guerdon win ! "

" Christ wore a crown of thorns for us,
He holds a crown of life in store ;

He let the vials of justice pour
On his devoted head, that thus,
Mortals defiled and lost, be led
To 'scape the doom, so dark and dread,
And rise to light and love above ;
And he will crown with wondrous love
His saints, who cast the things of earth
Aside, and seek the 'second birth.'

"Oh! for the righteousness, to lay
Meek hold upon His garment's hem!
Oh! for the strength to cast away
Earth chains, and win the diadem!
My God! my King! thou see'st alone

My weakness, and my heart of stone.
Melt this rebellious heart, and lend
  Thy saving grace, that—at thy call—
Without a doubt, a sigh—I spend
  For thee, my life, my strength, my all.

"Here in the dark, we, in our blindness lie,
  Claiming 'the shadows' for the real and
    true;
Beyond this dreamful life, Reality,
  Truth, justice, love, and holiness, break
    through
  The mists of transient being; and we view
In glimpses brief yet vivid—that—alone

When blent with th' æther round th' eternal
throne
Live we as living souls ; sundered from this
No better we than oxen idly browsing
On meadows lush with grass—or insect
drowsing
In lazy gladness in its bowers of bliss.

"Union with Christ, with His pure Spirit
blest
Abiding in our heart's recesses deep—
Dwelling with us—with us for aye to rest,
A gift for which we well may toil and weep.

"Behold our goal ! better than earthly goal,
See how time-phantoms shrivel into dust

Beneath this rising passion of the soul—
This love for Christ—the high, the pure,
the just!

"Methinks my feeble wings I lift; and brief
Shall be my weary biding on the plain;
Ere the acanthus sheds its latest leaf,
I mount beyond the reach of transient pain;
Oh! that with me Azellius might be found
Freed from the shackles of this lower life;
Had I not strained to reach the holy ground,
Had I not anguished in the bitter strife,
"His love had triumphed; and the heathen
crowd

Had muttered scoffingly, ' Her christian creed
' Serves but her steps to earthly gain to lead.' "
" But no! I warned him, 'one who loves
me more
Than he loves Christ, shall never call me
bride.'
These eyes are turned from gazing on that
shore
Where joys unfathomed and untarnished
hide ;
Where fragrant amaranth and asphodel
Twine o'er the home where hearts united
dwell ;
Thoughts of a gilded span of life are flown—
A martyr's crown for me—a martyr's crown.

" I see them bear me to th' arena's verge,
Where men in masses, piled from height to
base,
Glare on their victim's agony, and urge
Their myrmidons with fury to the chase.

" I see them bear me to the yawning pit,
And cast my mangled limbs in scorn
below—
And then I see the glorious end of it,
And nerve and spirit into rapture glow.
As, like a dream, the anguish dies away—
The crowds disperse—Life dawns, with all
' things new ; '

And Christ's smile flashes thro' the dark, to say,
'Well done, thou faithful servant, tried and true;'
Into a golden cloud He bears me up;
Drained to the dregs, and passed, the bitter cup;
All griefs forgotten—truest life begun,
Bathed in the glory of th' Eternal Sun—
Breaks on my ear the music of the skies
And sounds from angel voices mingled rise
To breathe my welcome into paradise."

VERSES BY THE WAY

I

Silver tide—silver tide,
  Travelling down to the sea ;
Over thy bosom, calm and wide
  Our bark flows silently.

Silver tide—silver tide,
  On, as our splashing oars
The crystal liquid waves divide,
  We near the distant shore ;

And the foamy spray, still tracks our way
Like glancing river-sprites
That dance behind at close of day
In a water-world's delights.

Silver tide—silver tide,
Thy journeyings soon are past,
As earthly pilgrims tranquil glide
To find their home at last ;

With hearts reflecting heaven's sky
In crystal calm like thee,
Hasting to lose themselves, and die
In ocean immensity.

II

"*Rejoice*"

Philippians,

chapter iv.

Rejoice in *hope!* for he is nigh,
Though veiled the sun, and dark the sky;
A soft and mystic influence
Breathes in the air, and wakes a sense
Of Presences, unseen, that spread
Their healing balms, and radiance shed

O'er barren earth ; and, ministering,
Lead failing hope to rise within.

Rejoice in *prayer*—that wondrous cord
Wrought through the mandate of the Lord,
To draw us t'ward the heights above ;
To seek the Source of heavenly love ;
A gem-set chain, of subtle power,
Within man's clasp from hour to hour ;
A "*treasure trove*" that cannot fail
To reach the light "*behind the veil.*"

Rejoice in *song* ; he gives the wing
To bear sweet incense as we sing ;
A summer gift ; so sweet, so strong ;

Companion as we toil along;
No silent witness to a heart
In which love claims nor right nor part;
But solace-yielding, through the strife,
The mournful strain, of earthly life.

Rejoice in *faith!* before our eyes
A wide unfathomed future lies;
Forth to the great Unknown we bend
Our footsteps—blind to view the end;
Through ever deepening perils led—
A changeful pathway still to tread;
Yet strong to strive—rejoice—endure
Faith's shield our strength—our safety sure.

III

*On Three Allegorical Pictures**

I—*Hope*

"Oh! lyre beloved! that with thy siren tone
Did'st charm each weary moment day by day—
Fondly I clasp thee still; tho', one by one,
Thy mellow utterances have passed away,

* By Watts

Tho' time, with cruel winds, thy strings hath broken,
Leaving on mem'ry many a tender token ;
My lyre beloved ! let now this last lone string
Breathe at my touch some echoing melody ;
Hope cannot live if lost her music-wing ;
Hope cannot fade while yet one note may sigh ;
These veiléd eyes ! oh ! were they free to gaze
Beyond the sphere where gleams yon star on high,
All grief would vanish 'neath the luminous blaze ;

Entranced I should behold heaven's perfect
choir
And recognise the lost strings of my lyre ;
Then, lapped in rapturous fruition, die.

IV

II—*Love*

A rosy boy, flower-crowned, unmeet indeed
To bar the entrance to his earthly home ;
Yon towering shadowy form can pass ; no heed
He deigns t'accord to Love ; unchecked his speed
With delegated power ; and he *will* come
Despite all tears, all prayers ; and draw the shroud

O'er some fair form on couch of sickness bowed,
Behold! beneath his chill remorseless tread
Blossoms lie crushed! the flowers of Love are dead!

And this is earthly Love, unmeet to cope
With death; we sigh, and sadly turn away;
And yet, above the gloom, breaks forth a ray,—
Another vision rises, yielding hope;
We view love's essence, the eternal spark
Yon shadowy form defying, chill and dark,

And plucking from his hand his sharpest
sting ;
This "Love," no rosy child with flower
crowned brow,
But sheathed in light, with mist-veiled seraph
wing,
Fresh from the heart of God, and poised
below,
Irradiating scenes of earthly woe,
From times' assaults uprising mightier
still,
Its beams dispersing clouds of anguish chill,
Diffusing sweetness from its hallowed breath,
Mounting superb above yon shadowy
"Death."

And this is Love, eternal and abiding,
Whose touch links souls to God, its pure hand guiding,
Towards that primal home from whence it came,
All noble hearts that own its sway, to claim ;
Its dual nature tarrying on the earth,
While resting in the region of its birth.

V

III—*Death*

The Court of Death

(In this picture, Death is represented in far other guise.)

Angel of Death! enthroned in sovereign state
With Rhadamantine brow of majesty,
On thee, king, courtier, bard, assembled wait
Submissive to thy unrevoked decree;

Pale mother! on the white shroud calmly sleeping;
Sweet bud of infancy! in safe grand keeping;
The serf, still fain beneath his chains to groan,
The fainting soul, with low unconscious moan,
The innocent child, standing so nigh the throne
With rosy morn's unclouded gladsome look,
The time-worn student, and the warrior bold,
Waiting the opening of the awful book,
The faithful blade dropped from his trembling hold,

Vain, vain his long resistless strength to save!
Forth breathes the fiat, and he meets his doom.

Above the multitude, through gathered gloom,
Like sunbeams tinting the unfathomed wave,
What light smites darkness? glory, that transcends
All woe? the kingly Death is *winged!* behold
Angels each curtained mystery wait t'unfold;
And mighty wings, instinct with power, he lends
To bear his vassals to the gates of gold.

VI

Opportunities

Yes! there are visitants who come and go,
Invisible—yet not unrecognised;
Could we but see them with their wings outspread,
With what a welcome, with what kindling glow
Their advent to our hearths were hailed and prized!
Dismissing coldness, lethargy, and dread!

They come ; they float along—
We rise not from our rest, nor cease our song ;
They lift their arms, and beckon—but in vain—
Unheeded, then, into dim distance soar—
Fled is the precious hour—the fruitful gain,
Our heaven-sent guests return no more, no more.

Fair deeds remain undone,
Such deeds as might a wreath of bay have won—
And sweet compassion's ministry to the lonely,

Requited by rich blessing from above—
And many a transient act, revealing only
The heart's allegiance to the God of love,
Words, with their pure, strong current, blanching white
The souls of men, drawing them to the light;
And thoughts, designed to live—such as inspire
A yearning for existence better, higher—
Than that of triflers—wasting life's short day—
Words, pure as gold, that lull unholy strife,
All, all withheld—unuttered—swept away—
Leaving no record in the Book of Life.

Too late! we wake and gaze! too late, alas!
In mem'ry they return—a chiding host;
We suffered each fair visitant to pass—
Our golden opportunities are lost!

VII

On reading a book by Carlyle

"Demand not nobleness from men; but give
To others of thy nobleness," and stand
Strength thus imparting freely. "Rise, and "work;
"Why covet earthly prize—the world's "delights?"

He who fights valiantly 'gainst evil powers,
Striving all wrong, injustice, to repress,
Leading a multitude to deeds of worth—
Building the faith of others on his own—
Rises a victor—tho' by fame uncrowned,
"There is a better crown than crown of bay,
There is a higher goal than happiness."
Shunning no labours—"foremost in the van"—
Lo! thus is reached the "highest life of man."

VIII

I sate, and listened to the melody
Which from the throbbing viols seemed to sigh ;
Schubert's creation, wrought so tenderly
That pleasure sank absorbed by sweetest pain ;
Dreamfully lingering within the brain
It tarried—vanished—and uprose again.
Then to myself I took that plaintive strain.

And I have borne it to my home away
To yield its bitter-sweet thro' many a day!
The sweet—one thought that thro' its cadence swept;
The bitter—which beneath each cadence slept—
Like life—twin cords of bright and sombre cast—
Lighting the future—darkening the past—
Bitter—the sense of joy-beams clouded o'er;
Sweet—that in heaven they linger evermore.

IX

Life passes—now as some uneasy dream
From which we long to wake and view the light;
Now as some festival, mid' lamps that gleam,
And songs that charm, and smiles that kindle bright;
Now as some work day—spent to gain the height—
Now as some spell of rest too swiftly flown;

But whether toil or calm—grief or delight
Inspire our gladness, or awake our moan—
Life passes ; and one grand result remains
Dwarfing the mem'ry of our joys or pains ;
Rising gigantic, as earth's dreams recede—
A doomed soul captive-led, or angel freed.

X

Question

Say, gentle songstress, shall I sing my lays
" After these lips lie cold within the grave?
Shall the song-gift be mine eternally? "

Answer

" Those lips that sing, in little life, His praise
Shall still their lay prolong ; the gift he gave
If rightly used on earth, expands on high ;

Sweeter and stronger shall their voices rise
Amid' th' harmonious choirs of paradise ;
While, by those minstrels who each siren sound
Spent and diffused o'er earth's less holy ground
The gift is lost in death, and never found."

XI

MEN AND ANGELS

We wait *for* Thee, desiring from Thy hand
All that our longings crave, our wants demand ;
The angels wait *on* Thee ; desiring nought
Save some fresh light from thy effulgence caught ;
Man seeks to clasp the joys that thou canst give—
Angels, in subtler bonds with thee to live.

XII

From "THORNDALE" versified

"When the bleak mountain, capped with
wintry snow,
Gazed down, unsatisfied, on emerald slopes
Where fertile wealth betokened them full
blest—
A voice was heard, 'More verdure were less
light,
Pure breezes play around thy lofty height
And on thy barren peak, the sunbeams rest.'"

XIII

Dreams are a fairylike creation, wrought
To link the present with the happy past,
And with the dawning future. Hearts that loved,
Behold in slumber still the lost, the dear ;
And, once again, the hand of ministry
Pursues its blest and gladsome task ; the eyes
Alit in tenderness, still brightly beam

In the weird dreamlight, as in olden time ;
And the long silent lips anew repeat
Those words of love, which glorified the past.
Scenes erst beheld, arise in beauty fair
And, as they pass, new landscapes swift unfold
Their glories magical ; the future shines
Before us, clear, instinct with life and light,
Fresh as the perfume of a summer breeze,—
Then, thank the Lord for dreams so sweet as these !

XIV

HARVEST THOUGHT

He gathers the wheat into golden sheaves,
And binds them, and bears them away ;
And the laden car with its burden heaves
On this glorious harvest day.

And the field is reft of its precious spoil
Piled high in golden array,

And the husbandman rests from his daylight
toil,
But the tares—oh! where are they?

The Reaper shall come to claim his own,
The season of harvest is near,
And ripe the corn, for his sunrays shone
Through long days, warm and clear.

Shall he place us safe in his sheaf of gold?
Shall he greet us with favouring smile?
Shall his pure and searching eye behold
Hearts free from sin and guile?

Oh! glad fruition! enrolled as Thine
With ransomed souls to bide,
In the hour when angel hands divine
The wheat from the chaff divide.

Meet with thy numbered saints to be borne,
Shelter with thee to find,
When the field is clear of its fruitful corn,
And the tares are left behind.

XV

The Book of God is as some starry scroll,
A shining constellation, set to guide
Our doubting footsteps as we journey on,
Emitting divers colours ; each pure star
Yielding its separate ray. Thus brightly shine
The primal virtues from their lofty height,
Justice and truth and heavenly innocence ;
And, in their midst, unnumbered gems appear,
Courage, and charity, and beaming hope

While, ever glowing, mid' the wondrous
scroll,
Winding, like wreath of brilliants, thro' the
whole,
Shines faith, the glorious anchor of the soul.

XVI

A SEPTEMBER ROSE

I watched that rose as seasons fled,
  And looked in vain for budding flower,
Sheltered from cold winds overhead,
  It met the sun, it drank the shower ;

No blossom smiled ! and hopelessly
  Ceased I to tend the barren tree ;
When—as autumnal days drew nigh
  One lonely bud appeared for me !

A safron-tinted beauteous rose
Greeted me in its loveliness!
Mused I—"this thing of nature shows
A truth my lyre may well confess.

We wait for conquest over ill,
We wait for answer unto prayer,
We wait—alas! we murmur still,
And sinks the heart with chill despair;

But—view this blossom late appear
Shedding its sweetness in thy home;
Arouse thy faith! dismiss thy fear,
Have patience—and the gift will come!"

XVII

OCTOBER

Grey mists uprising slowly circle round,
Veiling the landscape wide ;
'Neath them lies damp and chill the humid ground ;
Dear Lord ! I seek Thy side !
My heart grows faint, in human feebleness,
As these dark mists I see ;

While yet the sunrays shone to cheer and bless
I felt no need of thee ;
But now, I stretch my hands, and lift mine eyes
Thy vesture's hem to seek ;
And as the day each moment darklier dies,
And all around is bleak,
My soul goes forth in yearnings strong and deep
For aid, for strength, for light ;
Oh ! let some effluence from thy presence steep
This spirit—wake this sight—

Wondrous the healing of Thy gentle touch ;
And " whoso loveth much "
Finds rest in mystic union—drawing nigh
In passionate clinging, to the aid on high.

———

XVIII

CHANGE

Change is on all, time hastens to unfold
To every eye, what angels now behold—
The mighty of the earth—low laid in dust,—
The righteous poor awaiting honour's crown—
The sorrowful in heart—asleep in trust—

The base and godless, like some ship sunk down
A mournful wreck of ruined beam and spar—
The miser—maddened—bare—bereft of spoil—
The pure in heart, beholding God afar,
Saved from each touch of earth's corrupting soil—
Waiting the judgment in some shining star
O'er which the light of heaven unceasing lingers—
The martyr saint—resting in peace and love—

The mourner—now enrolled with gladsome
singers—
Vexed soul—entranced in sunny heights
above.

———

XIX

Inverernan

We watched, beneath the mountain's lofty
shade,
Till sunset hour drew nigh ; can pen portray
What glories met our then enchanted eyes !
The mountain blazed with colour that defied
All artist cunning—wondrous varied dyes
Intense, entrancing ! Fancy rose and
dreamed
Some weird enchanter's wand had poured his
store

His treasury of colour on the mount,
In rapture at its grandeur—fain to fling
All wealth of beauty on the titan's breast.

Attracted by the magic of the scene,
Thither again our steps we turned awhile.
Thro' the dark night, a storm had risen, and spent
Its fury o'er the mount and earth and sky—
And drooped the heather on the emerald plain ;
We waited, and anon the clouds dispersed,
The golden orb came forth in majesty,
And, to our raptured sense, we now beheld,

Spanning the mountain from its lofty
crest,
The over-arching rainbow grandly poised.
Clear sculptured dyes, in form and order
laid
Rose, green, and gold, with phantom smile
of love
Revealed, to exorcise all memories
Of nature's sterner moods; we lingered
till
The heavenly presence dimmed and passed
away.
Such beauties—limned by the Creator's
hand,
Inspire a deeper thought; that whoso wills,

May dream in waking hours, and meditate
On glories, sealed from earthly vision now,
Surpassing all that gilds the earth below.

W. Jolly & Sons, Bridge Street Aberdeen.

Is it the Wind of the Dawn?

SONG

Words by
TENNYSON

Music by
HARTE CONSTANTE

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